

public service her entire life, she also found time to work as a consultant on consumer relations for the FDA, serve on the national board of directors for the American Cancer Society and the American Association of the United Nations, two different boards, and then to teach government at several universities, including Reed College in Portland.

Maurine Neuberger is a treasure to the State of Oregon and to this country. I cannot tell my colleagues how happy I am today that we will be able to show just a small token of our appreciation by renaming the Cloverdale Post Office in her honor. She is an inspiration to me and should be an inspiration to all of us.

Thank you, Maurine, for your long years of public service.

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), the ranking Democrat on the full committee.

Mr. WAXMAN. I thank the gentleman for allowing me to express not only my support for this proposal but my appreciation to the chairman the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) for moving this so expeditiously. I want to congratulate the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH) on his leadership in all of these issues that have come before the Committee on Government Reform. I urge all Members to support the resolution.

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Very briefly in closing, let me respond to the very gracious comments of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH), the ranking member of our subcommittee, in saying how much I have appreciated his leadership and his hard work on a whole range of issues, but certainly on this bill as well. I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), too, as the ranking member on the full committee, for his initiative and his support in assisting us in bringing forward this measure which, as we have heard from the very, I think, heartfelt comments of the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY), as to how former Senator Neuberger is most deserving of this honor.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the unanimous support of our colleagues on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1327.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1327.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL NEED FOR RECONCILIATION AND HEALING AND RECOMMENDING A CALL FOR DAYS OF PRAYER

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 94) recognizing the public need for reconciliation and healing, urging the United States to unite in seeking God, and recommending that the Nation's leaders call for days of prayer.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 94

Whereas it is the necessary duty of the people of this Nation not only to humbly offer up our prayers and needs to Almighty God, but also in a solemn and public manner to confess our shortcomings;

Whereas it is incumbent on all public bodies, as well as private persons, to revere and rely on God Almighty for our day-to-day existence, as well as to follow the charge to love and serve one another;

Whereas we have witnessed the rejection of God's love through gratuitous violence and mayhem, hate, abuse, exploitation, abandonment, and other harms, much of which has been directed at the most vulnerable of our society, our children;

Whereas oppression, violence, cultural and ethnic division, strife, and murder have stained our communities and the world;

Whereas we are compelled to remind the people of the United States of the events that currently burden the hearts of the people, including—

(1) the senseless murder of our young people in Jonesboro, Arkansas, West Paducah, Kentucky, Springfield, Oregon, Pearl, Mississippi, and Littleton, Colorado;

(2) the brutal deaths of individuals by dragging, beating, burning, and exposure in Texas, Alabama, and Wyoming; and

(3) the civil unrest, systematic genocide, and religious and political persecution in Yugoslavia, Tibet, Turkey, China, Rwanda, and Sudan;

Whereas despite all, we as a Nation have been blessed with great prosperity and an unprecedented period of economic stability, for which we owe a debt of gratitude; and

Whereas in previous times of public need and moral crisis, the Congress and the President have recommended the observance of a day of solemn prayer, fasting, and humiliation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) recognizes the unique opportunity that the dawn of a millennium presents to a people in a Nation under God to humble and reconcile themselves with God and with one another;

(2) urges all Americans to unite in seeking the face of God through humble prayer and fasting, persistently asking God to send spiritual strength and a renewed sense of humility to the Nation so that hate and indifference may be replaced with love and compassion, and so that the suffering in the Nation

and the world may be healed by the hand of God; and

(3) recommends that the leaders in national, State, and local governments, in business, and in the clergy appoint, and call the people they serve to observe, a day of solemn prayer, fasting, and humiliation before God.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Concurrent Resolution 94.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Idaho?

There was no objection.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to have this opportunity to be able to bring House Concurrent Resolution 94 to the House in recognition of our national need for reconciliation and healing and calling for days of prayer, fasting and repentance.

Mr. Speaker, H. Con. Res. 94 is patterned after what was once common practice by national and State elected leaders, from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, ending with President Abraham Lincoln's great proclamation of March, 1863, calling for a national day of humiliation, fasting and prayer.

□ 1700

In fact during this period, from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, over 200 such resolutions were made. These proclamations literally called for a day or days where the people of this Nation refrained from working and humbly sought grace and forgiveness from God almighty through prayer and fasting in the tradition of the Old Testament's call for solemn assemblies.

Mr. Speaker, what drove these great leaders to call the Nation to pray, and I ask why should we do that again today? Well, consider the powerful words of Abraham Lincoln in this 1863 proclamation during perhaps the most difficult and tumultuous time in our Nation's history, and I quote from that proclamation:

We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. And we have grown in numbers and wealth and power as no other Nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which has preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us. It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended power to confess

our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect upon the problems that we are experiencing today, these great words are no less applicable. We, as a Nation, are witnessing with increased regularity callous acts of violence and murder, a disregard of life, exploitation of children, indifference to suffering, the breakdown of families, and, we know, a general moral decay. Much has been spoken about the events of mass murder and mayhem in places such as Colorado and Oregon and Arkansas, but every day we are hearing of new brutalities being committed against the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, why is this happening? We should listen to the words of Darrel Scott, a very brave father who testified before the House Committee on the Judiciary whose daughter was gunned down and killed at Columbine High School and whose son witnessed before his very eyes the murder of his two best friends, and I quote Mr. Scott when he said:

I am here today to declare that Columbine was not just a tragedy. It was a spiritual event that should be forcing us to look at where the real blame lies. What has happened to us as a Nation? Well, we have refused to honor God, and in doing so, we open the doors to hatred and violence. We do not need more restrictive laws. We do not need more religion. We do need a change of heart and humble acknowledgment that this Nation was founded on the principles of simple trust in God.

Mr. Speaker, Darrel Scott's words ring true. Having trust and faith in God means more than prayers, it means more than just going to church. It means humbly accepting the charge to serve and possess compassion and love and moral stability and to be humble. Humility means not only acknowledging God as the source of our blessings as individuals and as a Nation and the strength that we possess in adversity, but also recognizing our sins before God as individuals and as a Nation.

Mr. Speaker, we are the greatest Nation on Earth because we have one by one overcome weakness and evils which have plagued the world for centuries and even millennia. We have conquered imperialism and replaced it with democracy. We replaced State oppression with inalienable individual rights. We abolished the human indignity of slavery. We instituted equality for people of all colors and creeds. We have created unprecedented wealth and prosperity for numerous classes of people. Indeed we as a Nation have faced many numerous other challenges such as segregation, economic disparity and the great depression, the great evil of Nazi aggression and the Cold War.

Mr. Speaker, are we too presumptuous to suggest that we accomplished these great victories on our own? Indeed we as a Nation have the courage, the strength to face these trials because we are a Nation who relies on the hand of God. God, in return, has poured

out his blessings on this Nation because the principles that we are fighting for were righteous and true.

Mr. Speaker, in truth, the very foundation of this Nation is biased and based on faith in God and belief in moral principles. This was a point well understood by the founders of this Nation. Just to use one of the many quotes, John Adams said and I quote:

We have no government armed with the power capable of contending with human passions which would be unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

And Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville wrote back about the greatness of America in 1843 when he wrote:

I sought for the key to the greatness and genius of America in her harbors, in her fertile fields and boundless forests, in her rich minds and vast world commerce, in her public school systems and institutions of learning. I sought for it in her democratic Congress and in her matchless Constitution. But not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good,

he wrote,

and when America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a remarkable era. The dawn of a new millennium, a dramatic expansion of technologies and an unprecedented period of economic stability have led to even greater wealth and comforts of life for this Nation. But we simply cannot continue down the road where hate, uncivility, and bloodshed flourishes and expect the blessings of this prosperity to continue. This resolution does not resolve our problems, but it does move us and focus us to the source from where we should seek our guidance and our national healing.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. Once H. Con. Res. 94 passes, then the religious and civic leaders of our State and our Nation follow the charge we give them and establish solemn assemblies of prayer and fasting as their discipline would call for perhaps then love and compassion will replace hate and indifference.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) for sponsoring and bringing the resolution to the floor today. This legislation provides us time for an important discussion. I say discussion and not debate because I don't think there is a significant debatable issue on the value of prayer. I don't know of any Members of this House who opposes God or prayer. But what we should discuss is whether we are seeing a continuing trend of inching closer and closer to mixing politics and religion, government and religion, which

we have traditionally separated. It is now before us in a way which we should approach with a serious and non-partisan manner.

I cannot think of any issue that is more fundamental to our system of government than our Constitution's enduring guarantee of the freedom of religion. One of the inspirations the founders of our country had was the insight that all Americans should be free to believe or not to believe in one faith or even any faith. Americans can believe in the religion we choose, and worship as we believe proper.

Now I do not question the desire for religious response to help this Nation cope and recuperate from the tragedies that befell the communities of Jonesboro and Springfield and Littleton. I do not challenge the importance of religious guidance as a source of healing. I do not oppose the call for a period of reflection to reinvigorate our sense of compassion and humility. But I do question whether it is the role of Congress to initiate, mandate, or manipulate personal religious expression.

This country has a people that is far more religious than most other countries, and I believe a great part of that is the separation of church and state that we value so deeply. Americans are more religious because they do not have the cynicism of other countries, where there is a government-sponsored religion and religion and government and politicization are seen all as one.

There is no official state religion in our country, and therefore people take their personal religious decisions much more seriously. They recognize that our founders argued for the separation of church and state and wanted to make sure that religion was not politicized. Our founders warned of the corruption of church and state from a mutual infection when the two are joined together. A mild infection might be when clerics reach out for government funds and then obey government regulations. A much more virile corruption is when we see theocracies around the world wage actions that are clearly inhumane in the name of their religion and of God.

Thomas Jefferson opposed any kind of involvement in religion. He said he did not think that he had any authority to direct the religious experience of his constituents, and I think he made a very powerful case where he argued that we ought to allow this to be one that is very personal.

Now the proposal before us is an interesting one because it calls for a day of atonement, a day of fasting, a day of prayer. As a Jewish American, we have a day of atonement in our religion that is precisely, it seems to me, the kind of thing that the author of this resolution might have envisioned, a 24-hour period. We neither eat nor drink; we devote the day to prayer and penitence. But a very fundamental part of that day is a recognition that in repentance it is repentance, prayer and tzadaka. Tzadaka is sometimes looked at as

charity, but it really means actions of good deeds.

The reading of the day is one on ritual, but another reading of the day, which is even more significant, is one from Isaiah where in that reading God says to those who simply fast, afflict themselves, wear sackcloth and ashes, God said:

Is this what I want? Is this what I have called for? Does this satisfy me?

And his response in Isaiah is:

When you do acts of good deeds, it is not sufficient to inflict yourself with repentance unless you share your bread with the hungry, that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house, when you see the naked that you cover him and that you not hide yours from your own flesh.

Acts of righteousness are not mentioned in this resolution. It is only repentance and prayer, but a day of atonement should do more than that.

□ 1715

Our obligations, as Members of Congress, are not to tell religious leaders how to practice their religion or tell people who are religiously oriented what they must do to meet the needs of their Maker. We can act in ways that deal with the problems of this world, and that is what we should be doing.

I will not oppose this resolution on a voice vote, but I think we ought to think carefully about the separation of church and State which may be infringing upon.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) for his very wise words. They are very instructive, and I appreciate hearing from him and learning from him.

This resolution is no different than the resolution that was brought to the floor by the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) on April 14, 1970, when the Apollo 13 was unable for a few hours to return to earth, and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) at that time put forth House Resolution 912, in which that resolution states and asked that the Nation join in asking the help of Almighty God to assure the safe return of those astronauts.

The resolution goes on to say, in these days of monumental achievements in science and technology, it is well to be reminded that it has been the spirit instilled in man by his Creator that makes clear that his divine providence is really the sole source of man's sustenance; tremendously impressive resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HOSTETTLER).

(Mr. HOSTETTLER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Mr. Speaker, for four centuries, in different forms and on different days, during prosperous times and times of crisis, Americans

have set aside days to give thanks to God or seek his will.

The Pilgrims did so in Plymouth in the early 17th century. The Continental Congress issued proclamations of public thanksgiving in 1777 and 1780.

On June 28, 1787, at the Constitutional Convention, 81-year-old Benjamin Franklin called for daily prayers as the delegates convened. Quote, the longer I live, said Franklin, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that, quote, except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it, unquote. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and byword down to future ages, end quote.

George Washington called for days of prayer and thanksgiving while general of the Continental Army and while president of the United States. John Hancock and Thomas Jefferson issued proclamations of prayer and thanksgiving while serving as State governors.

In 1863, in the middle of a destructive Civil War and shortly after the death of his second son, President Abraham Lincoln recognized the merciful hand of God in his life and in the life of his Nation.

On October 3, Lincoln issued a formal proclamation passed by an act of Congress, initiating the First Annual National Day of Thanksgiving. While acknowledging the hardships caused by the Civil War, Lincoln chose to focus on the blessings bestowed by God.

Quote, the year that is drawing towards a close, Lincoln wrote of the bloodiest year in American history, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.

After listing those bounties, Lincoln's proclamation continued: No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people, end quote.

The list goes on and on, but a single theme emerges. Throughout our Na-

tion's history, Americans and their elected representatives have made it a priority to set aside days to acknowledge God's goodness, thank Him for His many blessings and seek His will.

I ask my colleagues to join me in support of the resolution of the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH).

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HOSTETTLER), before he leaves, if he knows that we have a National Day of Prayer on the books?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Yes, I do.

Mr. WAXMAN. Do you know when that is?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. It was earlier this year.

Mr. WAXMAN. Well, every year. It is in May.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Yes.

Mr. WAXMAN. So we do have that day set aside.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. This is a concurring resolution to ask for a day for the whole country once again to set aside prayer and thanksgiving and fasting.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS).

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) for presenting this resolution.

Healing and reconciliation as called for in this resolution are without question needed in this Nation and in the international community. The murders in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and Littleton, Colorado, were indeed senseless. The dragging and burning of individuals in Alabama and Texas were indeed brutal, and the religious and political persecution in Yugoslavia and Rwanda indeed call for civil unrest.

All of these tragic and unimaginable occurrences stem from one sad human behavior: Lack of tolerance.

We must first recognize that people of other races and with religious beliefs different from our own have value in our society. Then we, not as officials or political leaders, but as fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers and friends and neighbors, as human beings who love and care and feel, we must ask all people to come together in their everyday and sometimes routine lives to heal and console each other.

Just a few days ago, we came to the well of this House to debate amending our Constitution to prohibit the desecration of our Nation's flag. It is interesting to note that when this body begins each legislative day and at events in our district and at all sporting events, we pledge allegiance to this beautiful flag and our great Nation with these simple and profound words: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the

United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The very phrase, one Nation, means that we embrace, among other things, the religious beliefs of all people, including Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. In other words, we pledge on a daily basis to be an inclusive and tolerant Nation.

I myself am the son of two Protestant ministers and have a strong religious center, and while I will support the premise of this resolution I have reservations about its exclusive language. In advocating against desecration of the flag, we should also advocate against the desecration of the principles for which it stands, including inclusivity.

In fact, I agree with Vice President GORE who has called for bridging the gap between those on the right who would impose their religious values on others and threaten the notion of separation of church and State, and those on the left who believe that religious values should play no role in addressing public needs.

The language of this resolution, which specifies particular religious practices and beliefs, does not bridge the gap. A more appropriate step was proposed last week at the Family Reunion Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, by Vice President GORE as he announced a new Community Building Initiative that would provide technical assistance and training to faith-based and non-profit organizations.

Faith and values-based organizations reach out to all in need. They feed the hungry, clothe the poor, take care of those that are ill. In short, their vision and mission is to uplift their neighbors and make their lives better.

While resolutions are well-intentioned, the men and women in these organizations do what is called for in this resolution every day. They are healing and practicing tolerance. They set an example for all of us, and we should take our cue from them.

As a champion of nonviolence and tolerance, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stated: Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT).

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) for bringing this resolution forward. If for no other reason, it gives us a chance to talk about history and the relationship between this great government and God and prayer and all that goes together.

When I was sitting here listening to some of the debate earlier, I was looking up at these words right on top of the Speaker's rostrum. It says, In God We Trust.

The words that the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) started

off this conversation tonight about this resolution are so important.

Mr. Speaker, we need to remind ourselves of how this great country was founded. Many of us forget that the first official act of the Continental Congress was to appoint a chaplain, and then they prayed, and not a perfunctory prayer. They prayed for one and one half hours.

Let me read what Thomas Jefferson said in 1781: Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we remove their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?

Let me read what George Washington said in his farewell address: Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars.

Benjamin Franklin said, at the Constitutional Convention in June of 1787, and I quote: I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and the blessings of our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, a tradition which continues in this House to this very day.

And Abraham Lincoln in his Emancipation Proclamation closed with these words: "And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Members of what the Continental Congress said in 1779. They said, and this is from an absolute resolution that was passed by the Congress, and I quote, that it be recommended to the several States to appoint the first Thursday in May next to be a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer to Almighty God; that He will be pleased to avert the impending calamities which we have but too well deserved; that He will grant to us grace to repent of our sins and amend our lives according to his Holy Word; and that He will continue that wonderful protection which hath led us through the paths of danger and distress.

That was signed on March 20 in the Year of our Lord, 1779, by John Jay, President.

Finally, let me just remind Members that the very same day that the Congress passed the First Amendment to the Constitution, September 25, 1789, they approved a resolution requesting that President George Washington proclaim a day of prayer and thanksgiving in the land.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, speaking as a citizen I am grateful that I live in a country that protects my right to pray. Speaking as a Christian, I believe

deeply in the importance and power of prayer.

The idea of having a national voluntary day of prayer is one I can support. But speaking as a Congressman, I am deeply bothered by the clauses of this resolution which would put the U.S. Congress on record as telling individuals that it is a, quote, necessary duty, end quote, to pray.

Prayer should not be a government-imposed duty, Mr. Speaker. It is a God-given right. To even suggest prayer should be a government-dictated, necessary duty demeans the very sanctity of prayer.

Prayer is not a duty to be directed by this or any Congress. Prayer is an act of free will where one chooses, in the privacy of his or her own heart and soul, to communicate directly with our Creator.

What right under our Constitution does this Congress have the right to tell any citizen that it is his duty to pray? The answer is, we have no right to do so. In fact, those who have quoted our Founding Fathers seem to forget the first 16 words of the Bill of Rights, which say Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

I thank God that our Founding Fathers had the wisdom to write the Bill of Rights so that any attempt by Congress to mandate the religious affairs of American citizens would be null and void.

I thank God that Madison and Jefferson were wise enough to realize that the best way to ruin religion is to politicize it.

□ 1730

As a Christian, I revere and rely on God in my day-to-day existence. But what right under our Constitution does this Congress today, in a suspension calendar vote with no committee hearings, have to dictate this resolution, where "It is incumbent upon all public bodies, as well as private persons, to revere and rely on God almighty for our day-to-day existence"?

The answer is Congress has no right to do so. For Congress to declare that reverence of and reliance on God is "incumbent on all public bodies and private persons" is not only unconstitutional, it is morally wrong, in my opinion. A God that is powerful enough to create the universe and everything in it surely, surely has the power to make us believe or do whatever he so chooses.

But God gave man an incredible gift, the gift of free will. He gave each of us the choice to believe in him or not, to worship him or not, to pray to him or not. What right under heaven does this Congress have to infringe upon that divine gift of free will?

Any effort by this Congress to inject the notion of "necessary duty" upon how, when, or whether an American citizen must pray is not only blatantly unconstitutional, it offends my deepest conviction that the sacredness of one's

prayers and belief in God is that they are based on free will, not an imposed duty from government.

Mr. Speaker, I personally believe that faith and prayer can make ours a better Nation. However, in reflecting upon the debates in this House of recent days, I would suggest that we Members of Congress should consider spending more time praying and less time trying to tell others how they should pray. I would suggest we should spend more time trying to live up to the Ten Commandments in our personal lives than in using our public positions to tell others which religious commandments they should or should not follow.

Perhaps it is time for us in Congress to preach a little less and practice a little more. Maybe we should spend more time worrying about the log in our own eye and less about the speck in others'. God does not need Congress' help, but may God help us if we ever use religion as a means to our own political ends.

Mr. Speaker, God gave us religious freedom. In America, the Bill of Rights has protected that precious freedom for over 200 years. Let us not tamper with that freedom under any circumstance, and certainly not after only a 40-minute consent calendar debate and no committee hearings. Such an approach to the profound principles of prayer, faith, and freedom do a disservice to those high principles and to us.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have to agree with the gentleman from Texas, almost everything he said, except his understanding that this is a sense of the Congress, it is not a bill, that would confer any authority or mandate anything from the Federal government. It is simply a call.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CRANE).

(Mr. CRANE Asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding time to me.

I would like to harken back to what the gentleman said about that first amendment, Congress shall pass no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. That had to do with an established church. We are not allowed to create an established church in this country under our Constitution, but we simultaneously cannot obstruct the invasion of government by religion, as witnessed right up here on the wall, "In God we trust;" as witnessed by the opening up of each session of Congress with a taxpayer-paid clergyman's invocation in both the House and Senate from the beginning of this Republic. It is because our Founding Fathers recognized the importance of that.

I went to public schools in Chicago before World War II, and we opened up

every day with prayer, and the teacher assigned it to every child, you could be Jew, you could be Muslim, you could be Catholic, you could be Protestant or you could be an atheist. We did not have those in those days. If you were an atheist, you would be excused and the next person in line would deliver the one minute prayer.

I would urge my colleagues to support this resolution before us today.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND).

(Mr. STRICKLAND asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I would hope the previous speaker would not be suggesting that teachers should assign prayers to our schoolchildren in public schools.

Talk is cheap, and often in this Chamber rhetoric is empty. Last week this body voted to allow the posting of the Ten Commandments from the Hebrew Scriptures in our public schools. I think there are additional teachings from the New Testament that are also important and just as relevant to our daily lives.

As an example, I would like to share a passage from the book of St. James, Chapter 2, verses 14 through 17. It reads "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or a sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, and keep warm, and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily need, what is the good of that?" So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

The resolution before us focuses on faith, but it is lacking in its call for good works. I agree with President John Kennedy, who said in his inaugural address, "In this world, God's work must truly be our own."

I would feel more positive about this resolution if, along with its call to prayer and fasting, we also committed ourselves to effective legislative action, action to provide health care for all of America's children, action to guarantee access to affordable prescription drugs for our senior citizens, and meaningful action to stamp out discrimination and intolerance in our society.

But we do not call for those things in this resolution. For that reason, if there is a recorded vote, I will vote present on this measure, because I agree with St. James when he said that faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK).

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, outwardly as a Nation we are very prosperous and healthy, we are the envy of the world, but inwardly we are falling apart. We have witnessed so much violence today, especially among our young people. We keep asking, why?

There is road rage and there is sky rage, and it has become a way of life. There is anger everywhere. Why?

We need to continue to search for answers to these and other questions, but I do believe that a great deal of the reason we are having these problems is because America has turned her back on God. Gone is the gentleness that we used to experience, respect and love for one another, the basic Golden Rule. Do unto other as you would like them to do unto you, just simple kindnesses, it is missing today.

We are going through great pain in our Nation, and prayer heals pain. I believe it is fitting for Congress to set an example and urge our people to turn to prayer. At home people around me come up all the time and say, this is the same message, but we need to get back to God.

Every day Congress opens with prayer. "In God we trust" is over the Speaker's chair. This resolution does not establish religion, mandate prayer, or violate the separation of church and State, it simply affirms something we should not take for granted.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER).

(Mr. NADLER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly commendable to reflect on one's shortcomings, to seek forgiveness for wrongdoing, or to try to build a world for our children which is free from violence or hate. Indeed, across America these sentiments are often to be found in the prayers of our neighbors.

What is wrong with this resolution? For one thing, the Congress has arrogated to itself the role of religious director of the Nation. That is wrong. Congress has no business leading the Nation in prayer, or giving its official endorsement to religion in general, or to particular religious beliefs or practices.

The people who founded this Nation understood that religion, if it is to remain truly free, must remain an individual right, and that the hand of big government must be kept away.

No matter how this resolution is dressed up it is an official endorsement of religion and of particular religious beliefs and activities, and constitutes an establishment of religion. For those who think it is harmless and merely a statement in support of prayer generally and does not reflect a particular sectarian view, I point out two clauses.

The resolution states that the Congress recognizes the unique opportunity of the new millenium for religion. What millenium does the resolution refer to? In the Jewish calendar, it is the year 5758. The common calendar that we use counts time since the birth of Jesus to which the resolution accords great religious significance.

Of course, the significance of the birth of Jesus is a fundamental Christian belief, but I do not think Congress

should endorse or deny that belief. Many Americans, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, are not Christians. Despite the efforts of a very few, most Americans believe this is a Nation for all its citizens, not just for Christians. It is our duty to defend the right of all our people to believe or not believe, to pray or not to pray as they see fit. That is what our Constitution stands for, what our Bill of Rights is meant to protect, and what generations of Americans have fought and died to preserve, and what this resolution would compromise.

The resolution states it is a necessary duty of the people of this Nation to offer up our prayer and deeds to almighty God. I personally believe that to be the duty of all people, but who are we to instruct our fellow citizens in their religious obligations?

The resolution states it is the necessary duty of the people of this Nation in a solemn and public manner to confess our shortcomings. Most religions believe confession is a private matter. Where does Congress get the right and authority to declare them wrong?

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this proposed resolution even though I find many sentiments contained within it which are commendable.

It is certainly commendable to pray, to reflect on one's shortcomings, to seek forgiveness for wrongdoing or to try to build a world for our children which is free from violence and hate. And it is obviously commendable to work to achieve a world of love free from the violence, cultural and ethnic division, strife, and murder which this resolution rightly observes have "stained our communities and the world."

Indeed, across America, these sentiments are often to be found in the prayers of our neighbors.

So what's wrong with this resolution?

Well, for one thing, the Congress is arrogating to itself the role of religious director of the nation. That's wrong. Congress has no business leading the nation in prayer or giving its official endorsement to religion in general or to particular religious beliefs or practices. The people who founded this nation understood that religion, if it is to remain truly free, must remain an individual right, and that the hand of big government must be kept away. No matter how this resolution is dressed up, it is an official endorsement of religion and of particular religious activities and beliefs and constitutes an establishment of religion.

For those who think it is harmless and merely a statement in support of prayer generally, and does not reflect any particular sectarian view, I would point out two clauses. The Resolution states that Congress "recognizes the unique opportunity that the dawn of a millennium presents to people in a Nation under G-d to humble and reconcile themselves with G-d and with one another."

What millennium does the Resolution refer to? On the Jewish calendar, it is the year 5758. Our common calendar counts time since the birth of Jesus, to which the Resolution accords great religious significance. Now, of course, the significance of the birth of Jesus is a fundamental Christian belief, but I don't think Congress should endorse—or deny—that be-

lief. Many Americans—Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus—are not Christians, and despite the efforts of a very few, most Americans believe that this is a nation for all its citizens, not just for Christians. It is our duty to defend the right of all people to believe or not to believe, to pray or not to pray, as they see fit. That's what our Constitution stands for, what our Bill of Rights is meant to protect, what generations of Americans have fought and died to preserve, and what this resolution would compromise. This resolution states "it is the necessary duty of the people of this Nation . . . to offer up our prayers and needs to Almighty G-d." I personally believe that to be the duty of all people, but who are we to instruct our fellow citizens in their religious obligations? The resolution further states "it is the necessary duty of the people of this Nation . . . in a solemn and public manner, to confess our shortcomings." Most religions believe that confession is a private matter between an individual and his or her G-d. Where does Congress get the right to declare them wrong?

The sponsor of this legislation has, in fact, been very sensitive to issues concerning the establishment of religion when she perceived a threat of governmental institutions being hijacked by religious beliefs she does not share. For example, in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of January 31, 1996, she devoted the better part of an hour arguing that funding for environmental protection programs, including the EPA, violated the establishment clause, because some environmentalists came to their views via their religious beliefs. A copy of that speech follows my prepared statement. If the EPA violates the Establishment Clause, what can we say about this particular legislation?

Finally, I would just observe that this resolution is just another attempt by the majority to evade the real problems plaguing our nation, like hate crimes, poverty and gun violence.

For example, although it makes reference to the lynchings and hate crimes against People of Color and a Gay man in Wyoming, it never identifies these crimes for what they were, not does it urge legislation to make these hate crimes illegal in our nation. Matthew Sheppard was murdered for one reason and one reason only—because he was a Gay man, but the resolution doesn't say that and the sponsor won't support legislation. The bill also makes reference to the gruesome hate crime which resulted in the death of James Byrd who was dragged to death behind a pickup truck, but his name is nowhere to be found in this resolution, nor is the fact that he was murdered solely because he was African American.

This isn't the first time that Congress has obliquely dealt with these reprehensible crimes. Just enough of a statement so that they can say they did it, but not so specific so as to offend the racist constituencies out there. And, as always, no real solutions offered. No hate crimes laws, no increased enforcement, no laws to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, no additional help to communities.

This resolution is the latest in a series of assaults by the House on our First Freedom. May G-d grant us the wisdom to spend our time doing our jobs, and leave religion to the ministers, priests, and Rabbis of this nation—and to the people who will exercise their freedom of religion far more wisely than we could instruct them to do.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 second to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, last night I was going through my dad's things. He died in November. I found in his drawer this Bible. On the front it says "May this comfort and protect you."

Inside it says, "Commander in Chief, I take pleasure in commending the reading of the Bible to all who served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Throughout the centuries men of many faiths and diverse origins have found in the sacred book words of wisdom, counsel, and inspiration. It is the foundation of strength, and now as always an aid in attaining the highest aspirations of the human soul." Franklin Roosevelt.

The next page, "Our prayers are constantly with you, thanking God daily for your joy and faith in him. Heartfelt love, Mother."

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH).

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, I just do not know how many know this, but the State of Massachusetts actually had a State-supported church well into the 1800s. It was only when the other churches objected that State funding was cut off.

It is also interesting to note that the Congress of the United States actually at one point engaged in the printing of Bibles, not to mention above our own Chamber "In God we trust."

What is interesting is there has been a distortion of what we mean by the separation of church and State. The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CRANE) had it right. The Federal government was not supposed to have a State-supported taxpayer-funded church. We support that. We agree with that.

But Orestes Brownson wrote an interesting book where he wrote about the uniqueness of the United States, where we could combine both the proper space of the State and the proper space of the church; that the space of the church was not to intrude on the space of the State, and the space of the State was not to intrude on the space of the church.

What we have had happening in America is government imposing its own values and invading the proper space of people of all faiths. If America is to be healthy, we had better harken to the days of our Founders, who said that self-governing is about the ability to get it right without other human beings having to write rules and laws.

The foundation of this is simple common sense. This resolution urges a prayer. It is consistent with our Founders, our Constitution, and it is unbelievable that we are even having this debate today.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) is recognized for 30 seconds.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, if there ever is a time that we need almighty God, it really is now. If there ever is a time we need to pray, it is now. If there is ever a time that we need to humble ourselves as individuals, it is now. If there is ever a time that we need to plead for forgiveness, it is now. If there ever is a time that we need peace, it is now. If there ever is a time that we need healing, it is now.

□ 1745

I pray that we as a Congress and as a Nation can join together in prayer, supporting this resolution, calling for prayer, fasting and repentance.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, in this century, the United States has led the world in transforming industry, communication, and technology. We have found cures for once-fatal diseases and introduced freedom and democracy to the world. We sit on the threshold of a new century, and new millennium with a great mandate: laying the groundwork for a daring, new world.

On the brink of the nineteenth century, our Founding Fathers faced a similar mandate. One whose impact would reach beyond anything they could have imagined, and one which we live each day. They gathered together to establish a form of government that no other nation had ever attempted with freedoms that no other nation had ever even dreamed of: freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion.

The work of these men was truly inspired. The wisdom in the words of the Constitution serves as the very cornerstone of hope and liberty. But these men did not rashly pull the Constitution together without forethought. The delegates of the Continental Congress debated over the course of months to author a document which changed the course of history for all people. It was during this debate, that they came to a standstill. On June 28, 1787, 212 years ago this week, the delegates hit a stalemate over many issues.

Ben Franklin saw that the impasse could not be reconciled by any human means: "The small progress we have made after four or five weeks' close attendance and continual reasonings with each other—our different sentiments on almost every question . . . producing as many noes as ayes—is, methinks, a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the human understanding . . . I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings on our deliberations . . ."

Franklin recognized that the future of the Constitution, and the nation, depended upon Divine intervention. In the faces of the Congressional Delegates he saw pride, determination and no hope of compromise. Franklin knew that the only way the Constitution could be agreed upon was to call the delegates to humility and prayer. He recognized the need of each individual to search their hearts and seek the will of God.

Franklin called on the Members of the Congress to take three days of prayer and fasting. At the end of these three days, the delegates humbly returned, and were able to complete the framework of the Constitution which is the basis of the law of our nation.

As Americans, we are all grateful that Ben Franklin recognized the need for God and prayer within the political agenda. Each of the delegates had a strong understanding of right

and wrong. They knew the laws of the land needing to reflect a moral standard, a moral law. It is time we call our nation back to this morality.

Two weeks ago I offered an amendment called the Ten Commandments Defense Act, and you, my distinguished colleagues, helped to pass this legislation. It was a public declaration that God is not dead, despite the violence and confusion that haunts the current age.

Now I, along with the gentlelady from Idaho and others speaking on behalf of this resolution, call our country to set aside a time of reflection, a time to search our hearts and seek God's guidance. We must approach our families, our jobs, and our communities with the same humility and desire for reconciliation as our Founding Fathers sought in establishing the law of this land.

Today, we stand, not only on the brink of a new century, but at the dawning of a new millennium. We have the great honor, and the weighty responsibility, of setting the groundwork of the next thousand years. Let us do this with courage. Let us do this with honor. Most importantly, let us humbly set a precedent for the new millennium, and recognize God as the source of wisdom, goodness and strength.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the language of the resolution before us.

The religious faiths and practices of all of us as Americans are as important as they are personal.

This country was founded in part by people of strong religious beliefs who came to this new land seeking the freedom to worship totally beyond the reach of government. The doctrine of completely separating church and state was written into our Bill of Rights to protect our fundamental right to worship whenever we want, however we want, or even if we want.

I am very uncomfortable with this Congress—in a formal resolution—voting to observe "a day of solemn prayer, fasting, and humiliation before God".

The way for us to urge prayer and humility before God is by our example as individuals—not our political rhetoric as members of Congress.

I believe the teachings of Jesus as written in Matthew 6 verses 4-6 has application to the resolution before us:

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:4-6)

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I will vote "Present" on this resolution. I believe it is very important for people of all faiths to pray, reflect and seek divine guidance. It is not, however, the business of government to direct or prescribe this fundamental activity.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) that the House sus-

pend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 94.

The question was taken.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will now put the question on each motion to suspend the rules on which further proceedings were postponed today in the order in which that motion was entertained. Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 2280, by the yeas and nays;

House Resolution 226, by the yeas and nays; and

House Concurrent Resolution 94, by the yeas and nays.

The Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the first such vote in this series.

VETERANS BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 2280, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2280, as amended, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 424, nays 0, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 257]

YEAS—424

Abercrombie	Biggert	Camp
Ackerman	Bilbray	Campbell
Aderholt	Bilirakis	Canady
Andrews	Bishop	Capps
Archer	Bliley	Capuano
Armey	Blumenauer	Cardin
Bachus	Blunt	Carson
Baird	Boehlert	Castle
Baker	Boehner	Chabot
Baldacci	Bonilla	Chambliss
Baldwin	Bonior	Chenoweth
Ballenger	Bono	Clay
Barcia	Borski	Clayton
Barr	Boswell	Clement
Barrett (NE)	Boucher	Clyburn
Barrett (WI)	Boyd	Coble
Bartlett	Brady (PA)	Coburn
Barton	Brady (TX)	Collins
Bass	Brown (FL)	Combest
Bateman	Brown (OH)	Condit
Becerra	Bryant	Conyers
Bentsen	Burr	Cook
Bereuter	Burton	Cooksey
Berkley	Buyer	Costello
Berman	Callahan	Cox
Berry	Calvert	Coyne